

Premier Industries Doesn't Have Its Permits

The July 7th edition of the Leader carried the headline "Construction Begins for Slag Processing Plant" and explained that construction crews broke ground the previous week for Premier Industries' multi-million dollar plant east of Anaconda off the Mill Creek Highway to process slag into proppant for the oil and gas industry and pig iron for the steel industry.

The article quoted Rick Tabish, construction manager for the project, who said "the permitting process was arduous".

No doubt Tabish's comment referred to the acquisition of a storm water discharge permit for construction.

While a storm water permit is necessary to build a slag reprocessing facility it is not sufficient to operate one. Before Premier Industries can operate its proposed slag reprocessing facility it may be required to acquire a solid waste management license as specified by Section 75-10-221 of Montana Law. As of July 12, 2017, Premier Industries had not applied for the license nor had it contacted DEQ's solid waste management programs to discuss the project.

The same is true for an air quality permit as required by Section 75-2-211. Premier Industries' proposed project east of Anaconda is an iron smelter where "10 electric furnaces will process slag". If one operates a furnace there will be emissions, and any furnace hot enough to melt slag into pig iron is hot enough to volatilize any copper, lead, zinc, cadmium, arsenic, and other materials present in the slag and send it into the atmosphere. An air quality permit is required if a facility has the potential to emit 25 tpy (tons per year) of emissions or 5 tpy of lead. Premier Industries must demonstrate to state regulators that their emissions control equipment will remove likely contaminants and insure that the exhaust stream meets Montana Air Quality Standards.

While the people of Anaconda welcome Premier Industries efforts to reprocess the mountain of slag east of town and turn it into socially beneficial products, nothing much is going to happen in Mill Creek until Premier completes the permit process with state regulators and, at this point, that's a lot farther in the future than what has been represented to the community by Premier and its' spokesmen.

About the Author

John Fitzpatrick recently retired after a 40 year career as a Governmental Relations Executive with several different Montana industries. He represented industry as a lobbyist before the Montana Legislature and has permitted subdivisions, electric transmissions lines, power plants, non-metallic, coal, and metal mines in Montana including the Beal Mountain Mine near Fairmont Hot Springs and the Dave Gates Generating Station in Mill Creek.